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Edward VII, King of Great Britain and Ireland

EDWARD THE PEACEMAKER



AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE
CANADIAN CLUB, WINNIPEG, ON
MONDAY, MAY 16TH, 1910, BY
— ARTHUR SPURGEON —

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Photo : D. Knights-Whittome, Sutton.

KING EDWARD VII.

A FOREWORD

AMONG the many invitations I received on the occasion of my recent visit to Canada none gave me more pleasure than that extended to me by the Canadian Club of Winnipeg. The invitation was couched in such gracious terms that it made acceptance a real delight. The subject chosen for the luncheon address was "A Pilgrim from the Old Country," but just as I was leaving Toronto to cross the Great Lakes to Fort William and thence by the Canadian Pacific Railway to Winnipeg, I received a telegram asking me to substitute "Edward the Peacemaker" for the subject selected. I agreed readily.

May I add that I was greatly impressed with the manifestations of sorrow in Canada when the news was flashed across the sea that the King was dead? I was in Toronto on that fatal day—May 6th—and had pro-

A FOREWORD

mised to speak at the Empire Club on "The Literary Outlook of the Empire." The evening newspapers arrived just as the luncheon had begun—it was about seven o'clock in the evening according to London time—and the news that the King was critically ill cast a gloom over the proceedings. For the last time in King Edward's reign we sang with trembling voices, "God Save the King." There was not a dry eye in the room. A few hours later the tragic news arrived, and Toronto became a city of mourning.

In the following week I visited other cities in Eastern Canada, and everywhere the same demonstrations of sorrow were manifest. I spoke to the leading men of the East—men of such diverse views as Sir Wilfrid Laurier (the Dominion Premier) and Sir James Whitney (the Premier of Ontario)—and there was not a discordant note in the chorus of appreciation of the dead Monarch.

As in the East, so in the Middle West and the Last West. In the fortnight that fol-

lowed the King's death I travelled across Canada—from Montreal to Vancouver—and I noticed in that journey of three thousand miles, on the prairies and in the Rockies, wherever there was a cluster of houses there was a flag flying at half-mast. As I observe in my address, Winnipeg, the capital of the Middle West, was beautifully draped in mourning, and at Vancouver on the day of the funeral a Sabbath calm prevailed. All shops and factories were closed, and in the afternoon the entire population assembled in the Recreation Park for a memorial service. These demonstrations testified as nothing else could have done to the loyal sentiment of the Dominion.

Canada declines any longer to be considered a Colony. Canadians to-day are not Colonials, but Citizens of the British Empire, and they mourned, as sincerely as did the inhabitants of the Empire's capital, the death of their beloved King.

A. S.

June 14, 1910.

EDWARD

THE PEACEMAKER*

YESTERDAY, Mr. Arthur Spurgeon, of London, addressed the Canadian Club in the Manitoba Hall, his subject being "Edward the Peacemaker." In the absence of the President, Rev. Dr. C. W. Gordon (Ralph Connor), through family bereavement, the chair was taken by Mr. A. B. Stovel, Vice-President. Every seat at the luncheon tables was occupied. Grace was said by the Right Rev. Dr. Loftus, of Kenora, Bishop of Keewatin.

The Chairman having introduced the guest of the day, Mr. Spurgeon spoke as follows :—

It seems but a short while ago that I heard the King proclaimed by the heralds-pursuivant in succession to his beloved mother, Victoria the Good, followed in the summer of the next year by his coronation which I witnessed from the clerestory in

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the old abbey of Westminster. It was a memorable occasion. The beauty and chivalry of the country were gathered in the venerable pile ; representatives attended from all the dominions over the seas, and the imagination was fired as we saw the King, preceded by his beautiful consort, slowly walk up the aisle, still feeble from the effects of the illness which had cast him a few weeks previously into the valley of the shadow of death.

SCENE OF SPLENDOUR

The trumpets blew, the organ pealed, and the old dim abbey was filled with the most exquisite music, but the ceremony was a long and trying one. The aged Archbishop almost fainted as he approached to place the crown upon his Sovereign's brow, and the King, ever thoughtful for others, tenderly grasped the old man to prevent him from falling. The Archbishop, in a brave effort, rallied from the weakness which had seized him ; the crowning was completed, and then to the accompaniment of the trumpets there arose the cry “Long Live the King.” Guns were fired, the news was flashed round the empire and wherever Britishers were gathered together—in the little island set in the

northern seas, from Nova Scotia to the shores of British Columbia ; through the great continent where our kinsmen dwell under the Southern Cross ; across the plains and over the mountains of India, through the British territories of Africa, in the jungle and on the veldt—wherever the Union Jack fluttered in the breeze, there arose the cry “ Long Live the King.”

After the ceremony proper, there were many other formalities to observe, but at length all was over, and the vast congregation having joined in singing the old hymn “ O God, Our Help in Ages Past,” to the old familiar tune of St. Ann, the King, amid the plaudits of those in the abbey, emerged into the street. A mighty roar was heard—it was the shout of the great army of the People acclaiming their newly crowned king, while the cannon fired salutes and the bells clanged joyously from a hundred steeples.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

It was a day of thrilling emotion, one never to be forgotten in the march of years, and as the shouting died away and quietude prevailed in the cloistered abbey one could not help asking the question, What will the

king's reign bring forth ? What will be the writing on the parchment scroll ?

To day we are able to give the answer. The reign has been marked by all the best features of a limited monarchy and there has been no writing in red on the roll of history. Other Edwards are remembered in the nation's story by reason of their prowess on the field, but Edward VII. will go down to posterity as the King who gloried in the blessings of peace.

THE ANGELIC PROPHECY

I consider the four most beautiful words in the English language are "Mother," "Home," "Liberty," and "Peace," and of these the greatest is "Peace," for without peace the others are apt to be a mockery and a delusion.

From the night when, in a blaze of glory over the plains of Bethlehem, the angelic choir sang the first great peace anthem of the world, the aim of all good men and women has been to bring about the reign of peace. Sometimes it has been hard to believe that the angelic prophecy would ever come true, but we still hold with our great Victorian poet that the day will dawn when

The war drum throbs no longer, and the
battle flag is furl'd
In the parliament of man, the federation of
the world.

I am not one of those who declare that it is wrong ever to resort to the arbitrament of the sword, but those occasions are rare. War is generally the result of aggrandisement, coupled with misunderstandings. The finest work accomplished by King Edward was that he kept the aggrandisers in check and helped to remove the causes of misunderstanding between the nations of the earth. If peace hath its victories no less renowned than war, then King Edward was the greatest peace victor the world has ever seen.

HIS WORK FOR PEACE

The cause of peace does not arouse the enthusiasm provoked by war. There is not the thrilling grandeur in a beautiful summer noontide, when the sun shines in a blue sky and there is scarcely a ripple on the surface of the sea, as there is in a wild day of tempest when the artillery of the heavens is let loose, when black clouds roll across the sky and the waves of the sea are surging in mighty wrath. No novelist ever wrote a book, no

dramatist ever penned a play, in which virtue pursued its course unchecked to the last page or to the fall of the curtain. The pages of history would be monotonous reading if there never had been strife between individuals and nations, but war means suffering and sorrow for countless millions and that is why we say, Happy is the nation that has no history.

There may not be much in the last nine years that will appeal to the picturesque pen of the historian or to the novelist in search of colour, but who will say that these years have not, as a result, been richer in the happiness of the people? No one quality is the Alpha or Omega of statecraft or kingcraft, but the preservation of peace is the greatest, and that is why I declare to-day that King Edward is the noblest king who ever sat upon the British throne.

FRANCE AND GERMANY

Ten years ago it seemed that Europe was a vast powder magazine and men grimly asked each other, "Who will apply the match?" But the great Peacemaker waved his wand, and Fashoda developed into the *entente cordiale*. Who can recall those

dark days of 1900 without a shudder? But the King, supported by the responsible statesmen of all parties, tactfully intervened and to-day France and England are living in complete amity.

As with France, so it will be with Germany if the scare-mongers do not undo the work of their King. There are politicians, and, as an old journalist I am sorry to add, there are editors, who tell us war with Germany is inevitable. To talk about the inevitability of war is to make war inevitable. Gentlemen, I do not believe in predestination in theology, and I do not believe in it in statecraft. The late King saw that unless unfounded suspicions were removed, peace was in jeopardy. The task was a stupendous one, but undeterred by the difficulties of the situation, he faced it with rare courage and skill, and "Peace thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings," was not driven into the region of darkness and despair.

"GENTLEMEN AND BROTHERS"

Last summer a very significant thing happened. A deputation from the British churches, at the invitation of the German churches, visited Germany. The deputation,

consisting of men of all sects and creeds—Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Independents, Quakers, and Unitarians, was received with the greatest cordiality by leading statesmen and by ecclesiastical dignitaries, and when we visited Potsdam to present an address to the Emperor he welcomed and entertained us right royally. A reply couched in gracious terms had been drawn up and was handed to the Emperor by an officer of the court to read. The document as drafted began “Gentlemen,” but when the Emperor read it, by a happy inspiration he added the words “and brethren.” You can imagine the effect it had on all those present. The Kaiser said it was his supreme desire that friendly relations should be maintained by the two nations, and when he made that declaration I believed him. The utterance of the sentiment was a credit to the heart of the Kaiser, but it was also a tribute to the wisdom and the courage of our King. The Peacemaker had added another laurel to the victor’s wreath.

IN SOUTH AFRICA AND IRELAND

The inner history of the South African settlement has yet to be revealed, but all

the world knows that the King threw the weight of his influence into the scales of peace, and is it not a striking sign of the effect of his reign that in every city and town of Ireland, in the Orange North and the Nationalist South, East and West, resolutions of sorrow have been passed with absolute unanimity ?

THE KING AND THE PEOPLE

Then again in these days when we hear so much about class war it is well to remember the King's sympathies were always on the side of those whose life is often one long struggle with corroding care. My friend, Mr. Will Crooks, who passed through Canada a few months ago, is one of the ablest and most trusty labour leaders in England. When the King was stricken with his mortal illness Mr. Crooks said that if the King were to die the workers of the country would lose their best friend. That meant much, coming from such a man, but it was literally true. The people knew it and they loved their King with a deep and abiding love. What higher glory could a monarch desire ?

I remember Mr. Joseph Arch, the leader for many years of the English agricultural

labourers, telling me that on more than one occasion the King, when Prince of Wales, invited him to Sandringham, which is situated in the division of Norfolk which Mr. Arch represented in parliament. " You know you are my member," the Prince used to tell the peasant, and conversation followed which made the old man's eyes sparkle whenever he spoke to me about it in after days.

I could multiply these incidents a hundred-fold, but I have said enough to prove that the King was a consummate master of tact, and I may be permitted to add he always rigorously kept within the bounds of the constitution. A less able strategist would have created more trouble instead of preventing it, and it is because his wisdom and sagacity were linked with the profoundest regard for the unwritten laws governing a limited monarchy that his removal is such an overwhelming loss to the British Empire.

The flying of the Union Jack at half-mast, the draping of buildings (and let me say parenthetically, that no city in the Empire could be more beautifully clothed in mourning than this fair capital of the prairies), the rolling of muffled drums, the dirge of sorrow which wails through the Empire, all indicate that the people everywhere realise they have

lost a King who laboured unceasingly for the well-being of his subjects. As one touch of nature makes the whole world kin, so this touch of sorrow makes the Empire one. Sentiment is a lever which moves people and nations, and the scarlet thread of sentiment which runs through the British Empire binds it together with a unity that nothing can destroy. No one did more to cultivate the Empire sentiment than Edward the Peacemaker. And the world is immeasurably the poorer, because he has passed into the Great Beyond.

The chairman having thanked Mr. Spurgeon for his address, the following resolution was moved and seconded—

The Canadian Club of Winnipeg hereby records its profound regret and deep sorrow at the death of our late sovereign, King Edward VII. His beneficent rule and great personal influence did much to knit more closely together the great dominions beyond the seas comprised in the British empire, and won for him the personal love and loyalty of his subjects. In addition he showed such qualities of true kingship and diplomacy as tended to bring closer together in the bonds of friendship the

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great nations of the world, and thus justly earned for himself the title of “The Peacemaker.”

The resolution was passed in solemn silence, the members upstanding, and the proceedings closed with prayer for the new King.



